

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1136

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 3190

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, DR

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BALAGUER AND ASPECTS OF THE INTERNAL POLITICAL  
SITUATION

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 3171

1. DURING THE CONVERSATION DESCRIBED REFTEL, THE SUBJECT TURNED TO INTERNAL POLITICS. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUERY, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE FOUND THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION WELL UNDER CONTROL, THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO ENJOY THE SUPPORT OF A MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE. THE FLURRY OF STRIKES WAS TROUBLESOME, HE SAID, BUT DID NOT POSE A SERIOUS THREAT TO STABILITY.

2. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION REGARDING INCORPORATION OF THE OPPOSITION INTO HIS NEW GOVERNMENT, BALAGUER REPLIED THAT HE WAS WORKING ON THIS AND WAS MEETING WITH SOME SUCCESS. HE SAID THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION WERE FLEXIBLE WHILE OTHERS WERE OBDURATE. IN NO CASE WAS HE CONSIDERING PERSONS FROM THE RADICAL LEFT. HE NOTED THAT AS AUGUST 16 APPROACHED INCREASING PRESSURE WOULD BE PLACED UPON OPPOSITION OFFICE-ASPIRANTS TO SEEK HIM OUT. (COMMENT: BALAGUER WILL PROBABLY SUCCEED IN PERSUADING SOME FIGURES OF THE OPPOSITION TO JOIN HIS NEW GOVERNMENT BUT WILL QUITE PROBABLY NOT SUCCEED IN INCORPORATING THE  
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OPPOSITION AS A BLOC. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, POLITICAL

ANALYSTS WILL ATTRIBUTE THE SITUATION TO BALAGUER'S CHARACTERISTIC PRACTICE OF KEEPING THE OPPOSITION WEAK BY ENTICING SOME OF THE LEADERS INTO HIS GOVERNMENT, WHILE BALAGUER DEFENDERS WILL INSIST THAT THE OPPOSITION PRICE FOR ENTERING THE GOVERNMENT EN MASSE WAS SO UNREALISTICALLY HIGH THAT HE DID THE BEST HE COULD UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO ACHIEVE A GREATER DEGREE OF NATIONAL AND POLITICAL UNITY.)

3. THE SUBJECT THEN TURNED TO THE RECENT ARREST AND DEPORTATION TO SPAIN OF PRESIDENTIAL AIDE FRANK CABRAL, A NOTORIOUSLY VENAL MEMBER OF THE PALACE GUARD. THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED RELIEF THAT AN APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY HAD PRESENTED ITSELF TO GET RID OF CABRAL (CABRAL WAS A PROTEGE OF ONE OF THE PRESIDENT'S SISTERS). BALAGUER ELABORATED THAT DEEP HOSTILITY EXISTED BETWEEN CABRAL AND AIR FORCE CHIEF GENERAL LLUBERES AND WHEN THE GENERAL LEARNED THAT CABRAL HAD PLANS TO HAVE HIM MURDERED, THE MILITARY TRIUMVIRATE OF ADMIRAL JIMENEZ, GENERAL PEREZ Y PEREZ AND GENERAL LLUBERES CAME TO SEE HIM (BALAGUER) LAST SUNDAY (JULY 28) TO EXPRESS THEIR DISCONTENT AND DESIRE TO ARREST CABRAL. BALAGUER SAID THAT HE AUTHORIZED THE ACTION. (COMMENT: REPORTS HAVE BEEN WIDESPREAD HERE - AND THE EMBASSY HAS HEARD FROM MILITARY SOURCES - THAT THE MILITARY HAD ACTED FIRST AND INFORMED BALAGUER LATER, ACCOMPANIED BY SPECULATION THAT THE MILITARY WAS BEGINNING TO ACT INDEPENDENTLY. INTERESTINGLY, THIS MORNING'S PRESS CARRIES A FRONT PAGE STORY IN WHICH ADMIRAL JIMENEZ STATED FLATLY THAT "WHEN THE ARMED FORCES ARE NOT ACTING ROUTINELY WITHIN THEIR ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES, THEY DO SO ONLY UPON INSTRUCTION OF CIVIL AUTHORITY AND IN THIS CASE OF PRESIDENT BALAGUER.")

4. "CORRUPTION" WAS ANOTHER THEME. THE PRESIDENT OBSERVED THAT VIRTUALLY ALL OF DOMINICAN SOCIETY WAS CORRUPT. SOMEWHAT PLAINTIVELY HE NOTED THAT A NUMBER OF BUSINESSMEN AND OTHER PEOPLE REASONABLY WELL OFF REGULARLY BRIBED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THEN WERE LOUDLY CRITICAL OF CORRUPTION IN THE GOVERNMENT. DOMINICANS WANTED THREE THINGS: "CASAS, CARROS Y CONTRATOS", HE CONTINUED. THESE INVOLVED BUILDING PERMITS, CUSTOMS EXONERATIONS AND CONTRACTS FOR PUBLIC WORKS--ALL SUBJECT TO ATTAINMENT BY SUBORNING. HE SAID HE COULD NOT POSSIBLY OVERSEE THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT APPARATUS AND DID NOT KNOW WHERE HE COULD FIND ENOUGH HONEST PEOPLE TO POLICE THE SITUATION. IT WAS ALL TRUJILLO'S FAULT, ANYWAY, HE

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SAID ACCUSINGLY AND WITH AN AIR OF RESIGNATION, BECAUSE TRUJILLO HAD SET A BAD EXAMPLE BY TAKING A PERCENTAGE OF EVERY TRANSACTION IN SIGHT. (COMMENT: CRITICISM OF CORRUPTION IN THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY STRONG AT THIS TIME WHEN BALAGUER IS CONSIDERING CHANGES IN SOME KEY GOVERNMENT POSITIONS. HE IS ON THE DEFENSIVE ON THIS SUBJECT, SINCE HE WAS THE ONE WHO RAISED THE TOPIC.)

5. FINALLY, BALAGUER MENTIONED THAT HE WAS ENDEAVORING TO PERSUADE HIS SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, CARLOS AQUINO, TO REMAIN ON. HE SAID THAT AQUINO HAD SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION FOR UNKNOWN REASONS AND WAS BEING TEMPTED BY HIGHER INCOME FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR. BALAGUER SAID THAT HE THOUGHT HE NOW HAD AQUINO BACK ON BOARD, HOWEVER. (COMMENT: WE HAD HEARD THAT AQUINO HAD SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION. WHEN I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK HIM ABOUT IT AT A RECENT SOCIAL OCCASION, AQUINO SAID IT WAS A TACTICAL MOVE TO GAIN THE PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION, POINTING OUT THAT HE HAD OMITTED THE WORD "IRREVOCABLE" FROM HIS LETTER.) HURWITCH

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